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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines an investigation aimed at illuminating the rationales that states and state policy makers have used to support their early childhood education policy initiatives during the 1971-73 legislative sessions. An in-depth comparative case study approach is used in five selected states with regard to kindergarten legislation or programs for 5-year-olds. Each of the five case studies is divided into three sections: (1) an introduction to the particulars of the individual state's political system; (2) a look at the evolution of an early childhood legislative proposal from formulation through the various stages of development to ultimate resolution by the state legislature; and (3) a review of the major rationales found in the investigation of each state. The findings of the study are presented in terms of the similarities and differences of the states' policy making processes; the rationales exhibited in the cases are discussed and compared. (JMB)

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# RATIONALES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POLICY MAKING:

## The Policy Role of Five SEA's in Early Childhood Education Policy Making

by

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## Foreward

This paper is an abridged version of a report which is presently being prepared for the Office of Economic Opportunity (under Research Grant #50079-G-73). Those wishing the full report of which this American Educational Research Association paper is an outlined version, should write:

Hewitt Research Center
P.O. Box 179, University Station
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104.

The paper is divided into two parts. The Introduction includes a description of the problem to be investigated, the methodology and the content of the final report. The second part, the Analysis, is an outline of the major findings of the study. From this broad overview of Early Childhood Education (ECE) Policy Making in general, I will focus my symposium presentation specifically on "The Policy Role of Five SEA's in Early Childhood Education Policy Making."



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Part One: Introduction

## IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past decade a number of forces and factors have emerged to support the initiation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy making at the federal and state levels. In the 1960's substantial energies were directed by federal policy makers toward children of poverty at an early age, notably, the inauguration of Project Head Start in 1965. At the same time, university-based researchers, especially Benjamin S. Bloom (4) and J. McV. Hunt (7), presented evidence that early intervention strategies were crucial to child development and this stimulated the professional community, the lay public, and public policy makers to examine this policy issue. A major proposal in the area of social services and comprehensive child care reform was initiated at the national level in early 1970. The Mondale-Brademas legislation, whose financial cost estimates ranged from $7 billion to $30 billion yearly, was only narrowly defeated by a Presidential veto in December 1971. The effects of this rapidly mounting ECE movement toward publicly supported programs of preschool and day care have yet to be assessed (12).

At the state level, ECE has just recently blossomed as a major social policy issue. A survey of state ECE legislative activity, which was conducted for the purposes of this study (see Appendix B)*, has revealed that the volume of ECE legislation increased sevenfold from 23 citations in 1970 to 166 in 1973

*All references to Appendices (A through D) are contained in the final report.



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legislative session. Similarly, while Arkansas was the only state in 1970 with an office of child development (OCD), by 1973, fourteen states had established OCD's, or its equivalent, and four other states were considering such action (11). But very little is known about the reasons for this state policy activity. Given the potential impact of this issue, both the fiscal and non-fiscal (or societal) implications, it seems appropriate that we investigate why states (and state policy makers) are addressing ECE.

## PURPOSE

The central purpose of this investigation is to illuminate the rationales that states and state policy makers have used to support their recent ECE policy initiatives. We are particularly interested in elucidating the research rationales that have been evidenced in this process. Our secondary purpose is to describe how ECE policy was made. That is, who were the initiators of the ECE policy; what manifest or latent purposes did an interest in ECE reform serve; how was research-based evidence used in the formulation of this social policy issue; and what were some of the differences in how this policy issue was handled by the policy processes of our selected states. We envision the outcome of our study to be empirical, in the sense that the findings are for adding to our knowledge of "What is happening in this policy area."

Our study will not attempt to evaluate the research base for each policy initiative nor to judge what is an ideal basis for ECE policy making. Our competency as policy analysts allows us only to describe the rationales (especially the "scientific" bases) that were used in the policy process. Our project should provide individuals who know the early childhood field in a substantive manner an



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opportunity to evaluate whether a broad enough spectrum of research has been used in the formulation and development of early childhood education policy. However, this is not our judgment to make.

## METHODOLOGY

In attempting to develop a research framework in which to investigate Early Childhood policy making at the state level, we were hindered by lack of any prior studies on ECE on which to guide our analysis and by a lack of studies in the general area of state politics of education (1)(2)(8)(9). The few studies that did exist on ECE were either descriptive summaries of state code requirements (13) or surveys of state legislation (6)*. In view of these limitations, we have had to develop our own methodology. To understand the rationales behind the recent ECE policy activity, we felt an in-depth treatment or case study approach was necessary.

A simple enumeration of formal legislation would provide little insight into the rationales for ECE policy making. Formal legislation is the result of a complex process which has elements of politics, uncertainty, and evolution. The activity of the participants reveals the presence of these elements: they bargain; they enter and exit from the process at different stages; they have both spoken and unspoken rationales; and the final outcomes--ECE legislation--are not necessarily

*We wish to alert the reader to the problems of symbolic and nonimplemented legislation. It needs to be noted that because a law is passed and enrolled in the state code, does not guarantee that it will be enforced. (See Appendix C--Historical Perspective.) Similarly, it is not unusual at the state level for legislators to enact substantive legislation knowing that the legislative appropriation for this program would not be funded (see New Mexico and Georgia case studies). Therefore, legislative outputs need to be scrutinized closely--by means of case analysis--before their meaning can be determined.



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determined by the initial motivations. A comparative case study design should provide useful data, as well as 'hard evidence" about the rationales that really moved the development of the ECE legislation. However, given the lack of prior work in this area, we must consider our investigation as exploratory.

As a prelude to our policy investigation, we studied the rationales behind the establishment of the first school entrance age laws (which have persisted as the present-day basis for ECE policy making). We have initiated an historical analysis of ECE policy making in the 19th century by focusing on the emergence of the National Compulsory Education movement (see Appendix C, Chapter 1) and by reconstructing a case study of the origins of kindergarten reform in California at the turn of the century (see Appendix C, Chapter 2). Insights gleaned from this historical analysis were incorporated into the categories of data--the research questions--that we developed for our investigation of contemporary ECE policy making. (See page 6.) We will also seek to analyze whether these rationales for ECE policy activity have persisted or changed over time.

In operationalizing this study we utilized the Wirt-Kirst political framework (14) to identify the array of potential participants, e.g., representatives of the legislative branch, executive branch, state department of education, and established and ad hoc interest groups. Each case then required on-site interviewing of the major participants. We utilized an elite interviewing technique (5). The interviews had two components: an open-ended phase in which we allowed the interviewee to describe the particular legislative initiative, and a structured phase in which we sought the individual's responses to a common set of questions. We were especially attentive to the unspoken as well as the spoken rationales and possible ulterior motives that an interest in ECE might serve. Our overlapping



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interviewing of the major actors and the use of a structured component (common set of questions) in our interviews allowed us to probe behind the manifest content of the interview to the latent motives--rationales--of each political participant.

## SCOPE

The field of ECE included a wide range of activities concerned with the care and development of children. For the purposes of our policy study, we can classify the present ECE legislative alternatives as follows:

a. Primary/Elementary - reform directed primarily toward changes in elementary schooling.

b. Kindergarten - programs primarily for 5-year-olds.

c. Preschools - programs for 4-year-olds/younger children to four years.

d. Early development - programs primarily aimed at providing a wide range of services to children from the earliest years (through eight years).

e. Day Care - programs which provide part-time care for children in the absence of their parents.

Because a national policy study of the fifty states was beyond our capabilities due to both financial and time constraints, we chose to limit our study to a set of five selected states. And due to the lack of early investigations of policy in this area, we have decided to concentrate our analysis on only one type of ECE output, kindergarten legislation or programs for 5-year-olds.* This common emphasis will permit the development of a comparable framework for analyzing this unexplored policy issue. It is our intention that these five individual cases will establish a modest but welcome first step toward a better understanding of ECE policy making at the state level and a research base from which future policy investigations can be launched.

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*See Appendix A for discussion of Criteria of Selection, pp. 2-5.



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Therefore, we propose an exploratory analysis of Early Childhood Education policy making that will investigate five selected states that have initiated kindergarten legislation between the 1971-1973 legislative sessions. In accord with our policy-selection criteria (see Appendix A), we selected the following legislation for analysis: West Virginia, Senate Bill 343, 1971; California, Senate Bill 1302, 1972; New Mexico, House Bill 360, 1973; Ohio, House Bill 159, 1973; and Georgia, House Bill 421, 1972.

## FOCUS

In keeping with an in-depth treatment or case study approach, it is important to have a consistent framework for analyzing the rationales behind recent ECE policy activity. To ensure a uniform focus on the dynamics of ECE policy making, we have formulated a core of research questions to be applied in all five case studies:*

(1) What was the status quo ante?
(2) Who launched the proposal(s) and what was the rationale(s)?
(3) What was the response to the proposal(s)?
(4) What legislative provisions were proposed? How were they altered throughout the policy process and what was the rationale(s) for the modification(s)?
(5) How was the initiative developed?
(6) Who assumed the role of legislative leadership and why? What was the involvement of the Executive branch, i.e., State Education Agency, the Governor's office, and other agencies?
(7) Who opposed and what was the rationale(s)?

*These questions follow an analytical framework most recently utilized by Berke and Kirst in their examination of the politics of state school finance reform which will be published in a forthcoming book, The New Era of State Politics of Education (3).



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These questions will guide our analysis of the rationales for ECE policy making. We will focus only on the policy decision stage of the policy process, that is, what happens to an idea between the time it is conceived and the time it becomes the law of a state?* Legislative action will conclude each of our cases and we will not follow the initiatives through their implementation.

CONTENT

Each of the five cases (Chapters II-VI) is divided into three sections:

OVERVIEW--we provide the reader with an introduction to the particulars of the individual state's political system;

EVOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATION--we trace the early childhood proposal from its formulation through the various stages of its development to its ultimate resolution by the state legislature. We utilize the seven research questions as a framework for discovering and illuminating the rationales--explicit and implicit--evident at the various stages of the policy process.

SUMMARY--we review the major rationales that we found in our investigation of each state.

The final section of the report (Chapter VII) presents a comparative treatment of the findings of the study in terms of the similarities and differences of the states' policy making processes and a comparative discussion of the rationales exhibited in the cases. Included in the appendices are (i) a description of the methodology and criteria utilized in our selection of our five cases (Appendix A), (ii) the results of our survey of state ECE legislative activity between 1970-1973 (Appendix B), (iii) an intensive historical analysis of the national ECE policy movement in

*The two other stages of the policy process are the Policy Implementation and the Policy Consequence (Mosher, 10:IX-20).



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the 19th century, and a separate case history of the kindergarten movement in California in the late 19th and early 20th century (Appendix C), and (iv) a selected bibliography (Appendix D).

## Part Two: Analysis

### OPENING STATEMENT

1. There are different ways to view policy making, i.e., micro-economic model, the organizational model, and the political model.

2. Most studies have found that policy making is a political process.

   a. For example, Lindblom et al. . . . "mutual adjustment" process
   b. Research and scientific evidence came into the process at different points, but they do not determine final outcomes.

3. At the level of broadest generalization, our study suggests that state governmental support for ECE is as political as support for any other governmental function.

4. Our investigation confirms our initial insight that you cannot just look at a single piece of legislation in isolation. The only way you can substantiate whether policy making is largely political is by utilizing the methodology and scope that we chose for our research project--an in-depth case study analysis.

### COMPARATIVE TREATMENT OF OUR FINDINGS*

I. Background to Reform

A. Major Findings.

1. Spillover of federal influences stimulated states' interest in preschool programs, e.g., Head Start; Title I, ES A; Title IV-A, Social Security Act; OCD prerogatives. (See summaries of cases for examples.)

*The arabic numbered items are the tentative findings of the study.



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2. All political considerations took place within an historical and cultural context.

   The fact that 95% of the children in Ohio had the opportunity to attend kindergarten was a major determinant of the legislation's acceptability. Similarly, the broad array of ECE programs and the experience of the California SDE established a policy baseline that made the four-year-old proposal feasible. In Georgia, New Mexico and West Virginia, we found a history of kindergarten initiatives which, in a sense, broke the ground for legislative consideration.

3. The early 1970s also presented a favorable fiscal climate for addressing "addition" state priorities, such as ECE.

   a. State tax revenue bases were increasing which created state budget surpluses and enabled states to address ECE, e.g., New Mexico and West Virginia.
   b. Federal revenue sharing resources e.g., California and Georgia.

B. Other Considerations.

II. Initiation of Reform

A. Major Findings.

1. The role of new actors (new, in point of time) was crucial to the initiation of ECE proposals.

   a. In California, the newly elected minority SPI wished to establish his leadership, united educators, and impact on an unsatisfactory public school system. . .
   b. In Georgia and West Virginia, newly elected Governors. . .
   c. In New Mexico, an ad hoc interest group, KIDS, emerged out of a general dissatisfaction with the lack of preschool (kindergarten) program for middle class children. . .

2. The power of individual energizers and homogenizers has been a significant factor in the development and determination of ECE policies.

   a. West Virginia--President of Senate and Governor
   b. California--State Superintendent of Public Instruction
   c. New Mexico--Public School Finance Chief and Senate Finance Chairman
   d. Georgia--Governor



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3. Political leadership came from persons who held official offices in government rather than from persons who were pressuring from the outside.

   a. New actors were more than simply mediums for inputs from pressure groups. Only in New Mexico did we find evidence of David Truman's political model where an ad hoc interest group, e.g., Kindergarten-In-Demand-State-wide (KIDS), brought pressure on state policy makers to address the ECE issue.
   b. Policy entrepreneurship originated within the formal system, e.g., Governors (Georgia and West Virginia), CSSO (California).

4. Formulation of the issue was strongly influenced by federal policy activity. State initiators indicated a recognition of need in ECE area and they evidenced a desire to act, but we found that the particular response that they selected was strongly influenced by federal priorities:

   a. Georgia: heavy influence by federal program priority (dollars for an office of child development approach with Title IV-A matching resources).
   b. West Virginia: Appalachian Regional Commission priority to invest in the preschool area. . . and the introduction of the Comprehensive Child Development Act (Mondale-Brademas Bill).
   c. New Mexico: high level of federal dollars in numerous programs which provide ECE services to "targeted groups."
   d. Ohio: Title V, ESEA planning grant was used to initiate the ECE policy issue by contracting with an outside research organization, the Battelle Institute.

5. While the SEA's were not the initiators and the leaders, as Governors Carter and Moore, their presence was felt in more subtle ways in the ECE policy making process. For example, in Ohio and New Mexico the ECE policy outcomes over time did reflect the priorities of the respective SDE's--in New Mexico, a selective targeting of funds to only needy five-year-olds and in Ohio, the careful orchestrating of the political culture over several legislative sessions to find an acceptable resolution to the kindergarten issue.

   a. SDE's did not, for the most part, illustrate creativity in approaching the emerging ECE issue. They conducted very limited searches for policy alternatives and too readily accepted kindergarten as "the best solution." For example, the SDE in West Virginia did not seriously consider the Appalachian Educational Laboratory home-based program as a viable alternative.



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b. The SDE's showed a hostility toward policy alternatives other than conventional approaches. For example the CSSO and the SBE reacted strongly to Governor Carter's attempt to implement a non-traditional Early Childhood Development program with its requirements for an inter-agency or "shared administration" of the ECE program. They refused to cooperate with the Governor's ECD program, even though it would have achieved badly needed resources for ECE services to needy young children. They feared loss of administrative prerogatives to the Department of Social Welfare in the preschool area. Similarly in West Virginia, the SDE was reluctant to support the preschool component in the ECE legislation which Governor Moore was pursuing to qualify for the pending Comprehensive Child Development Funding under the Mondale-Brademas federal legislation. Even in California, it was the State Superintendent who overwhelmed a basically indifferent SBE and SDE in the launching of the ECE proposal.

c. The leadership posture of the SDE's ran the gamut:
   (1) West Virginia: Reluctance/(new CSSO in 1970) Strategic
   (2) New Mexico: Passive support
   (3) Ohio: Anticipative
   (4) Georgia: Active-reactive
   (5) California: Initiative

d. In general, the SDE's could help (California, Ohio, and West Virginia--post 1970) or impede (Georgia, New Mexico--1973) the development of the ECE policy initiative. And the lack of leadership by the SDE's was due in no small part to the fact that major political actors, e.g., governors and legislators took the initiative since ECE supported their own intrinsic political concerns. The SEA's were not particularly trying to hold back the initiatives, as much as the political figures ran with the ball and sometimes out-distanced the education constituencies.

e. We wish to caution the reader that the ECE issue might not be a reliable indicator from which to generalize--across all policy areas--about the typical leadership qualities of the individual SDE's.

6. Investigating our "historical hunches", e.g., Marvin Lazerson's findings about kindergarten reforms in the 19th century, we found no evidence of teacher organization involvement in the initiation of ECE reforms. In fact, they were not very active in process. Similarly, working mothers/women's liberation had little impact on legislative process.



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7. There were alternative means of launching the ECE issue, e.g., the State Superintendent in California selected a highly-visible, blue ribbon group of citizens and professional educators as his mechanism of initiation; in Georgia the Governor called together a Task Force of Department Heads in 1972, while a 1974 Task Force included all the major political interests, with a predominance of legislators; and in West Virginia professional educators (especially a leading out-of-state consultant) were invited to work with the State Department staff in developing the ECE proposal.

B. Rationales and Substantive Responses.

1. Rationales in Support.

a. Social:
   (1) All states neighboring West Virginia had kindergarten.
   (2) Members of California Task Force felt they had an obligation to "make sure" all children take advantage of kindergarten.
   (3) There was a recognition of need for human development by Governor Carter in Georgia and Appalachian Regional Commission (high incident of disadvantage (43%) among pre-school children in Appalachia).
   (4) The federal programs (Title I and Head Start) had created a middle class demand for public preschool services (Georgia, New Mexico, Ohio and West Virginia).

b. Political:
   (1) ECE was a vehicle for uniting people behind public education (California CSSO).
   (2) It addressed the "injustice of present discriminatory system" where only needy were served (West Virginia, California).
   (3) 86% of the children were already being served in public kindergartens.
   (4) ECE was a side-payment (California and West Virginia).
   (5) ECE presents an opportunity for state policy makers to secure additional federal resources (Georgia and West Virginia).

c. Economic:
   (1) Why remediate when we can address the problem and save tax dollars by investing in ECE (Georgia and California).
   (2) Alert state policy makers realized that the state was eligible for more federal dollars, especially high matching Title IV-A, Social Security and potential Comprehensive Child Development Funding (Georgia and West Virginia).
   (3) State surpluses were available (West Virginia and New Mexico).
   (4) The transportation impediment was resolved through earlier finance reform (Ohio).



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d. Research:

(1) Statistics on dropouts, failure or retention in rate in elementary school and incidence of disadvantaged were offered to support the need for kindergarten (Georgia and West Virginia) and for California ECE plan.

(2) Kindergarten is the best preparation for first grade (Georgia, Ohio, New Mexico and West Virginia). In Ohio this led to the SBE's recommendation for compulsory kindergarten which was based on Battelle findings.

(3) Head Start research literature (Ohio and California)

(4) Literature on needy and disadvantaged children as priority (Georgia, New Mexico).

(5) National Statistics on the low performance of West Virginia. children on standard test--"We are behind the national average because we are starting later" (West Virginia).

(6) Bloom's research was used to justify different policy alternatives: Georgia - Early Childhood Development, West Virginia and New Mexico -- kindergarten; California - ECE.

2. Substantive Responses.

a. Social/Philosophic:

(1) "Not all children need this service" (Georgia and New Mexico).

(2) "The state has no right to interfere in this area" (California, Georgia and West Virginia).

(3) Fear of federal intervention (Georgia).

(4) Familial concerns and implications (California and Georgia). In West Virginia the AEL counter proposal was criticized as interference in the home.

(5) Babysitting (Georgia and New Mexico).

b. Political:

(1) The AEL feared that an implementation of a conventional kindergarten program would "close the door" on public support for their home-based alternative.

(2) AAUW in West Virginia contended that teacher training was the proper function of the university, not demonstration centers.

(3) The reaction against the governor's selective program by the legislators was motivated partly by a desire to appeal to a broader constituency (Georgia).

c. Fiscal/Economic:

(1) ECE was a lower priority--"there is no money" was a popular reaction and it took several forms:

. We need to build up 1-12 program (Georgia and West Virginia). We need to restructure K-3 programs before extending schooling (California).

- We have other areas of need that are more important: the mentally retarded issue more of a need (New Mexico and California) the handicapped and disadvantaged have more need (Georgia).
- Fiscal constraints: teachers, facilities, and cost (West Virginia).
- More efficient alternatives were available--AEL/WVEA. In California, the Department of Finance opposed "long-term commitment of funds without statistical data"--the proposed program had not been tested. They also recommended that extension of the present program to include 4-year-olds be delayed until present system was restructured.

(2) Impact of compulsory (attendance) kindergarten on private schools (Ohio).

(3) Education did not justify additional resources--mismanagement (California)

(4) ECE was seen as ploy by teachers to gain more jobs (California).

d. Research

(1) Moore, Moon and Moore research--there was no appropriate research basis for extension of preschool downward (California, New Mexico).

(2) AEL/WVEA against conventional kindergarten since research studies showed "no payoff"--they challenged kindergarten as the proper policy response for rural children (West Virginia).

(3) The general lack of planning data impeded the ability of policy makers to act (West Virginia).

(4) 'We can not support ECE initiative based on previous evidence--Steiner Report (New Mexico)--The Coleman Report (New Mexico).

(5) If our problems are in early elementary years--let's concentrate our resources there, not build on an additional kindergarten program (Georgia legislator).

(6) Bloom research on importance of early intervention was used in opposition to certain ECE proposals to justify a number of different policy options:

- Conservative California legislators agreed early years were important, but this was more reason to limit involvement of state.
- The Appalachian Educational Laboratory used Bloom's findings to justify a total ECE program for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds, not just the conventional kindergarten alternative. They advocated a broader ECE policy response.



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3. Comment about the nature and form of the responses.

a. Responses will vary with the definition of the proposal:

The substantive responses that were elicited were very much influenced by the way the initiative was described. For example, a kindergarten proposal received little response from Ohio policy makers, but the California Plan to put four-year-old children in schools evoked a major response. This suggests that policy makers who want to get four-year-olds in school might wish to frame their initiative around an acceptable policy alternative, such as, kindergarten.

b. The response will vary with regard to the idiosynchratic features of the state's culture.

Certain kinds of political contexts make ECE policy making easier than other kinds, and conversely. . . the same ECE proposal had different receptions in different state's political culture, e.g. Georgia versus West Virginia response to Early Childhood Development type policy proposals and the New Mexico versus Ohio response to kindergarten.

III. Legislative Decision Making Process

A. Descriptive Comments.

1. Different types of legislation, e.g. in West Virginia the proposal incorporated the mandatory offering of kindergarten, preschool authorization and the implementation of Demonstration Centers, while in Ohio the legislation was simply a mandatory offering of kindergartens.

2. Counter proposals, e.g. in West Virginia the Appalachian Educational Laboratory proposed a home-based experimental program as an alternative to the conventional kindergarten program for preschool education in this rural state.

3. Strategies of introduction in the legislature--procedures used in the legislature to get the proposal started.

a. Who wrote up the legislation: e.g. in California the Office of Legislation of the California State Department of Education. . . while the Legislative Reference Service in Ohio. . .



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b. Bill introduction techniques: dual versus single introduction, e.g., in West Virginia companion legislation was introduced in each house, while in California three separate spieces of legislation incorporating the total California Plan were introduced.

c. Substantive versus appropriation process: e.g., in Georgia in 1972 the Governor attempted to secure a line-item appropriation for his proposal without introducing substantive legislation.

4. Legislative modification:

It is crucial that we highlight the different stages in the policy process, and that we understand that legislation as originally introduced is not the same as the final legislative enactment. For example, in West Virginia the State Department of Education and the Appalachian Educational Laboratory proposals were merged into one piece of legislation.

5. Incremental policy making:

The use of a phase-in process (West Virginia and California) or a delayed funding mechanism (Ohio, Georgia, and New Mexico) were instrumental in the ultimate acceptability of the ECE legislation.

B. Major Findings.

1. A haphazard flow of research into the policy making process.

There are few systematic or formal avenues of access. For example, in New Mexico the Chief of Public School Finance heard Ed Zigler talk at the Education Commission of the State which reconfirmed his belief that "only the needy" should be served.

2. Partisan Analysis and Forensic Social Science.

Policy makers have used research and research rationale that tend to support their predetermined positions, e.g., Representative Burke in California utilized the Moore, Moon and Moore article as a weapon to counteract the California ECE plan.

However, there are some straightforward uses of research rationales operating in the political process, e.g., Ohio State Department use of the Battelle Institute study findings.



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Research evidence, however, does not create constituencies, but rather constituencies utilize research to serve their own purposes. This seems especially true in a research area such as ECE where there is no overwhelming preponderance of evidence pro or con.

3. Rationales that were in the system a long time were effective but were often taken for granted, e.g., the 1967 rationale for preschool in New Mexico was a factor in the legislative decision not to implement a full-scale kindergarten program in 1973. Similarly in West Virginia, the President of the Senate had become convinced over the years as a legislator that kindergarten was necessary.

4. The impact of research needs to be analyzed in terms of its impact on the final legislation. For example, in California the Bloom research, that is, the importance of early intervention, had little impact on the final legislative output. The final legislation was a political compromise that allowed a two-year pilot program for restructuring the existing kindergarten through third grade public system.

5. Certain kinds of professional prejudices influence the behavior of policy makers.

   Politics interacts with the professional training of people in the system. And professional educators tend to view problems in certain traditional training ways. For example, the tendency of educators to define programs very narrowly in terms of conventional kindergarten even though other creative alternatives were available, such as the Appalachian Educational Laboratory program for rural children in West Virginia.

   Similarly, SDE's tended to rely on routine or standard sources of information in solving their problems; e.g., Ohio SDE and Battelle Institute; West Virginia and New Mexico SDE's on out-of-state university consultants. Their quest for solutions evidenced a definite "limited search" behavior and reliance on Standard Operating Procedures.

6. The merging of the ECE initiative with a broader reform enhanced its successfulness.

   In West Virginia, California, and Georgia the school finance reform was used as a vehicle for moving the ECE proposal through the political system. In Ohio, an earlier school finance reform had set the basis for the ECE success in 1973.



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